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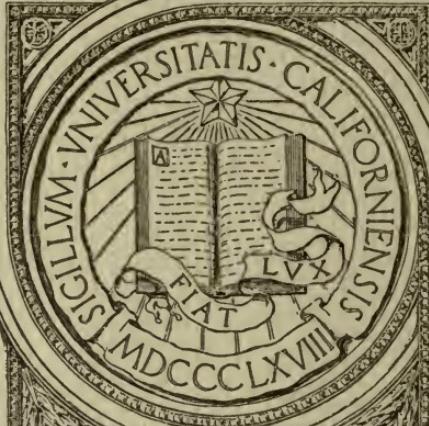
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# HOUSING CONDITIONS

IN PLAINFIELD AND NORTH  
PLAINFIELD, NEW JERSEY



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The Anti-Tuberculosis League  
and  
The Charity Organization Society  
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# **HOUSING CONDITIONS IN PLAINFIELD AND NORTH PLAINFIELD NEW JERSEY**

**T**HE following report is based on an investigation made for the Charity Organization Society and the Anti-Tuberculosis League in January and February, 1914, by Miss Udetta D. Brown. Miss Brown has made similar investigations in many other cities, including Grand Rapids, Mich., and Bridgeport, Conn., and was recommended for this work by the National Housing Association. Her report is printed here without alteration.

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### PREFATORY NOTE.

The making of this Survey has been greatly facilitated by the co-operation of the committees for whom the work was undertaken and by the assistance of several of the city officials.

Special acknowledgment is due Mr. Chandler and Miss Mattison of the Board of Health, who put at my disposal the records of the office,—thus making possible a history of the tuberculosis situation which could have been obtained otherwise only partially and with difficulty.

For the statistics of tenement conditions in both Plainfield and North Plainfield, I am indebted to Captain Allen of the State Tenement House Department, who kindly supplied all the data from the official records.

To all who have helped with information, suggestion or advice; I am most grateful, and especially to Mr. Ihlder, Field Secretary of the National Housing Association, for advice during the investigation and criticism of the report.

UDETTE D. BROWN.

7/2/19  
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## Plainfield and North Plainfield, New Jersey.

Some twenty-five miles from New York is situated the city of Plainfield, New Jersey, which, with the borough of North Plainfield, has a population of nearly 30,000 people. Plainfield, itself, is squeezed into a corner of Union County so that it is difficult for it to absorb the adjacent communities of North and South Plainfield, which are in Somerset and Middlesex Counties respectively.

More fortunate than many suburban towns, Plainfield has a history antedating railroads and rapid transit. Here and there, standing somewhat aloof from the more sociable modern houses, are large, colonial dwellings, suggestive of the early days when Plainfield was on the direct stage route from New York to Philadelphia. The old Quaker Meeting House still stands "shingled on the side," in grounds "well fenced and free from brambles." Trees that proclaim a growth of a century or more add dignity to street and garden. These relics of an older day give a pleasant background to the more hurried life of the present generation.

The building of the railroad has brought rapid changes. From the small pre-Revolutionary hamlet, with busy mills and out-lying farms, Plainfield has grown to be a city of varied interests. In addition to the descendants of the old families, it has now not only a commuting population of considerable wealth, but an industrial community interested in the manufacture of tools, silk, and other products.

This combination of old town, suburban community, and manufacturing centre shows in the population. There are still many representatives of the old families engaged in business in the city, there are sections of fine residences, such as the Netherwood development, given up to the homes of commuters. The factories require more or less skilled workmen, many of whom have comfortable homes in the city and borough. The less skilled work of the community is performed by negroes and immigrants. Among the latter are many Italians, Slavs and Russian Jews.

These unskilled immigrants are peculiarly subject to the effects of bad conditions. Their lack of English puts them at a disadvantage in seeking or picking up information, their lack of knowledge of our customs and our country often causes them to accept, as a matter of course, conditions of work and housing which are really below normal. Where there is a large number of unskilled and uneducated foreigners herded together, there is danger not only to them but to any community in which they live, if these un-American conditions are allowed to persist. So surely as we do not instill our standards of work and living in the immigrant so surely will he drag our standards down toward his. The problem of standards of work is one which has demanded the attention of unions and similar organizations. The problem of housing conditions calls for community action.

The first thing which any community must do to secure adequate and proper housing for all its people, is to learn just what the present conditions are, what state and local laws and ordinances there are to control conditions, and then to devise measures which will set decent standards and stimulate good, while discouraging bad tendencies in house-building.

To find an answer to some of these questions and to study what relation, if any, there is between bad housing and tuberculosis, committees of the Charity Organization Society and the Anti-Tuberculosis League of Plainfield and North Plainfield joined forces to have a Survey made of these conditions in the city and borough.

The method used was one which has been found effective in other cities. Districts were selected in which the conditions were typical of the cheaper dwellings of the community; these were studied in detail and a record made for each house. To this was added a general survey of conditions and especially of recently erected small houses, with the idea of gaining some insight into the present tendencies in small house construction.

For the purposes of this report, certain words are defined as follows:

#### TERMS DEFINED.

*One-family house*—a dwelling lived in and arranged to be lived in by one family only.

*Two-family house*—a dwelling lived in or arranged to be lived in by two families only. Usually each family has one floor, one apartment being above the other. This does not

include semi-detached dwellings in which each family has an entire house except that one wall is common to both houses.

*A tenement*—a dwelling lived in or arranged to be lived in by three or more families.

*A semi-detached house* is one having exterior walls on three sides, the fourth side having a wall common to two houses.

*A row* is three or more houses built together, with common walls between adjoining houses.



COTTAGE PLACE. ROW OF HOUSES, NOT BEAUTIFUL, BUT PLENTY OF LIGHT AND AIR IN THE APARTMENTS.

One-family, two-family houses or tenements may be detached, semi-detached or in rows.

“*City water*” is used to denote the supply furnished by a private company but conducted to the houses by pipes laid in the streets.

*Uninspected house* (U. H.) is used in the tables to designate those houses which could not be inspected, for any reason. Several houses were vacant, two were undergoing alterations and others were closed though occupied. The number of houses classified (U. H.) varies in the different tables because some conditions can be noted even though the house is closed.

## DISTRICTS SELECTED.

The districts selected for special study were, in Plainfield, Cottage Place, and West Third Street between Plainfield Avenue and Liberty Street. In North Plainfield, one district including both Harmony and Race Streets.

### COTTAGE PLACE.

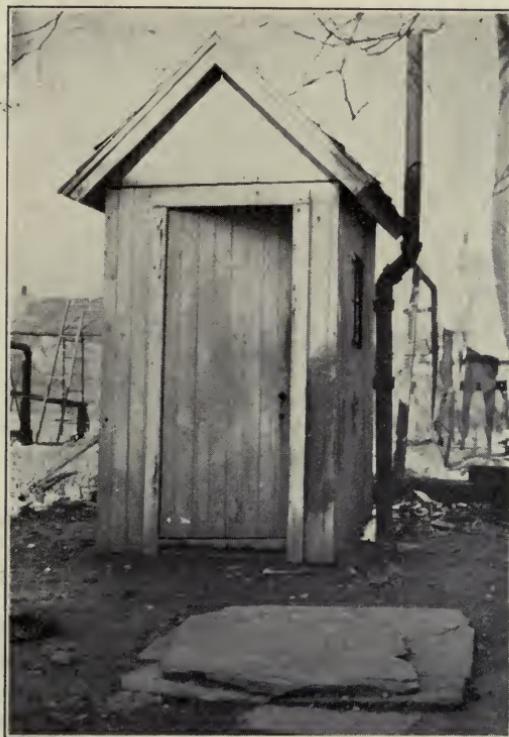
This street nearly parallels the railroad track on the north as one approaches the main station when coming from New York. On one side of the street is the railroad embankment, on the other a straggling line of dingy-looking, cheaply



COTTAGE PLACE. SEMI-DETACHED HOUSES AND COTTAGES.  
THE MEN ARE PEDDLING OIL-CLOTH.

constructed houses, the homes of more than forty families. Most of the houses are small one- and two-family dwellings with sufficient space about them to secure good light and abundance of air. Eight of the houses, however, are of the semi-detached type and so poorly planned that two rooms, of the six in each house, have no window to the outer air. More unsightly than these semi-detached houses, but much better supplied with light and ventilation, is the row of two-story and basement dwellings at the end of the street. These houses have been built only a few years and are in good repair though cheaply constructed. Their worst feature is the

cellar closet, in a compartment poorly lighted and not sufficiently ventilated. This convenience is shared by two families, frequently one negro and the other white. The plumbing is too cheap to be kept in good condition easily and the situation is complicated by the presence of boarders in many of the families and the fact that the closets are too accessible from the street.



COTTAGE PLACE. YARD WATER CLOSET WITH VENT PIPE EXTENDING SEVERAL FEET ABOVE THE ROOF.

Connection with the city water has been made for the houses on this street, only one remaining with no trap. All too frequently the fixtures are in the yard instead of in the house. The most unusual feature of the plumbing installed here is the vent pipe which may be seen extending up the outer walls of a house and rearing several feet above the roof. In some instances such pipes have been included even in the construction of yard closets, the size and length of the pipe out of all proportion to actual necessity.

The population of Cottage Place consists chiefly of negroes, Italians and Poles. Both the immigrant peoples take boarders, probably as much because of their recent immigration and the number of single men among them as because of any economic necessity.

### WEST THIRD STREET.

Here the houses are two or two and a half stories high, in general. Nearly half of them are two-family houses either built to be so used or used in this way without any preparation. There are a few tenements; these are newer than most of the houses and for that reason it is difficult to make any comparison. Time alone can show how well they stand the wear and tear of the coming years. The rest of the houses are one-family dwellings.

There is at present practically no question of dark rooms in this street, a condition which should be preserved by continuing the open spaces between buildings, and ample rear yards.

The lots on this street are too deep for economical development. There is already a tendency to construct houses on the tail ends of the lots or to move back the little old dwellings and erect larger buildings on the front. Such a tendency should be prevented if Plainfield does not want to contend with the worst results of bad housing,—vice and crime, which lurk in the hidden places of every city, but shun well lighted streets and wide open spaces.

Small business is coming into this block so that many old buildings have been converted to a combination of store and dwelling. Among the shops are bakeries, groceries, and butchers. These last are an offense to the better element on the street. Chickens are killed on the premises, and, I fear, other animals from time to time. The result is most unsanitary, as the offal is put in uncovered barrels in the cellar instead of being immediately removed.

The population of the block is a mixture. One or two of the small houses are still owned and lived in by Germans or Irish who hold themselves aloof from their neighbors. The majority of the people are negroes or Russian Jews. The latter have been in the country such a short time that they are still somewhat isolated by their inability to speak English. But already they are living amicably in the same houses with the negroes and there is reason to fear that there may be inter-

marriage between the two races such as is found in the case of Italians and negroes, when they live in similar close quarters.

There is evidence on all sides that many of these people have no conception of American standards of living; houses are unclean, sinks and toilets are filthy. Often where an attempt is made to keep things clean it is a failure because of lack of knowledge. That the conditions are not universal and that



WEST THIRD STREET, FLASH-LIGHT PHOTOGRAPH  
OF CELLAR OF BUTCHER SHOP. THREE BARRELS  
SIMILAR TO THIS BLOOD-STAINED, BE-FEATHERED  
ONE, WERE FREQUENTLY SEEN IN THIS CELLAR.

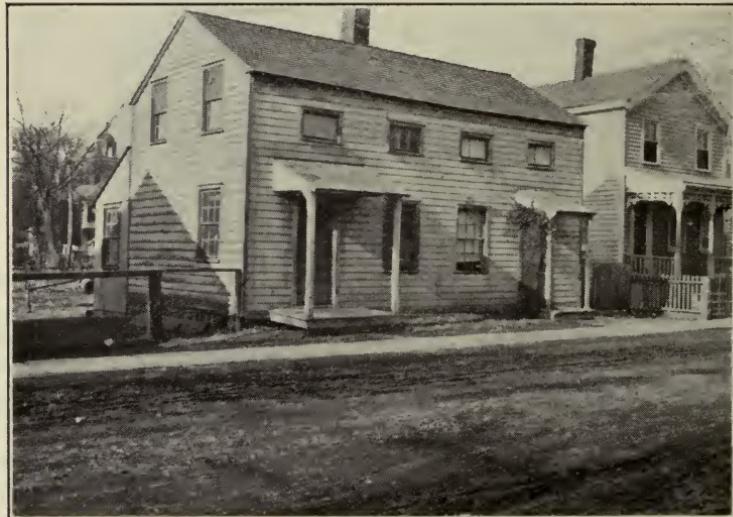
it is possible to live on this street in a decent and orderly manner is proved by a number of apartments which are neat, tidy, and clean. Probably the best of these is that of the negro carpenter living in one of the semi-detached houses near Plainfield Avenue. The house is absolutely spotless from cellar to attic, in excellent repair and shows every evidence of intelligent usage.

Rents on the street are high out of all proportion to the cheapness of the buildings, and the conveniences furnished. Twelve or fifteen dollars and even higher was the rent stated, although there are vacant houses on the street and elsewhere in Plainfield. One woman said there was some decrease in the rents being asked but it was not possible to verify her statement.

During the detailed inspection of this block the mercury fell to zero. The result was many frozen fixtures followed by bursting water pipes, flooding of cellars and attendant inconveniences. In some cases the houses were so cold that the women were afraid to wash the floors and do the ordinary cleaning. The ice on the floor of a toilet compartment in one house testified that there was some reason to fear that scrubbing the floors might only produce a miniature skating rink.

#### HARMONY AND RACE STREETS.

These minor streets adjoining each other in North Plainfield, have the small lots and houses which under suitable safe-



NORTH PLAINFIELD. SMALL SEMI-DETACHED HOUSES AND DETACHED HOUSE BEYOND.

guards should be the best kind of homes for the man of very small means. Most of the houses have four or five rooms and accommodate only a single family, absolute privacy being limited by the occasional joint use of hydrants and closets,

and by the too thin partitions of the semi-detached houses, which are numerous.

A single tenement shows that it is none too soon to guard against this menace to right living. To emphasize the danger, and demonstrate that such buildings are bad even in uncrowded districts, this one has dark rooms in two of its four apartments.

North Plainfield has no sewers, so the waste water in Harmony and Race Streets is thrown into the yards except in the rare instances where there are cesspools adequately large for the slops. Most of the yards are too small for such cesspools.

Several of the householders keep chickens, but beyond this and small storage sheds there are no out-buildings. Here and there gardens are found and there is no evidence or talk among the neighbors of the constant stealing of garden truck and chickens that was the repeated complaint on West Third Street.

#### TYPES OF HOUSES.

With rare exceptions all of the 123 houses inspected were made of wood. Even in the more expensive dwellings in the city little appreciation is shown of the æsthetic value and durability of brick, a material which lends itself so well to the type of house now being erected in our smaller cities. In recent years great advance has been made in coloring and finishing brick and in the manufacture of other durable building material, so that far greater variety can be obtained than formerly. This construction has the advantage over frame construction of looking and being more substantial and durable. A greater number of such buildings would lend dignity and charm to the city of Plainfield.

NUMBER OF ONE-FAMILY HOUSES, TWO-FAMILY HOUSES AND TENEMENTS IN EACH DISTRICT

Name of District	Number of 1-Family Houses	Number of 2-Family Houses	Number of		U. H.	Houses Total
			Tenements	Families in Tenements		
Cottage Place .....	18	18	1	3	4	41
West Third Street .....	20	17	4	15	6	47
Harmony and Race Streets .....	30	3	1	4	1	35
Total .. .	68	38	6	22	11	123

From the table it is seen that in the Plainfield districts, the one-family and two-family houses appear with about equal frequency; in North Plainfield the one-family house is far more frequent. These are often of the semi-detached variety, superior to the two-family house but lacking advantages possessed by the one-family house. The table also shows the presence of tenements in all the districts inspected. How great a menace the tenement is to Plainfield is brought out even more clearly in the following table compiled from the records of the State Tenement House Department.

### TENEMENTS.

#### PLAINFIELD

	<i>Houses</i>	<i>Families</i>	* <i>Population</i>
2 story . . . . .	20	70	350
3 story . . . . .	51	211	1,055
4 story . . . . .	16	88	440
5 story . . . . .	1	8	40
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Total . . . . .	88	377	1,885

#### NORTH PLAINFIELD

	<i>Houses</i>	<i>Families</i>	* <i>Population</i>
2 story . . . . .	4	15	75
3 story . . . . .	10	40	200
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total . . . . .	14	55	275
GRAND TOTAL . . . . .	102	432	2,160

\*Estimated, 5 persons to a family.

Nearly two thousand people in the city of Plainfield are living in tenements, with open fields on every hand calling to them to come out into the sunshine and make homes for their children, where all the winds of heaven and floods of sunlight will daily purify the atmosphere. The trees and winding streams of Plainfield proclaim it the ideal spot for a city of homes. The tenements already built foreshadow the doom of such a growth unless there is united effort to preserve the better type and check the advance of the unsavory barrack.

The present State law is not sufficient to accomplish this. It was framed for cities already in the grip of tenement conditions. Local ordinances, wisely conceived and intelligently and impartially enforced, must serve until such time as the people of New Jersey realize the necessity of State control of all housing conditions. Plainfield is already in the van. She

has an ordinance requiring windows to the outer air in all rooms used for sleeping purposes. This ordinance should be made more definite and should be thoroughly enforced. Better provisions for sanitation and convenience should be insisted upon.

There is cause for rejoicing in the fact that the small house still predominates and that there is a fine opportunity to prevent the further advance of tenement house construction. This is most truly a case where "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure"—indeed, from the experience of other cities, we are led to believe it is worth many pounds of cure.

### CONSTRUCTION.

The small houses of Plainfield are cheap rather than inexpensively built. Initial cost rather than cost of maintenance seems to have been the chief consideration. Thoughtlessness in planning, and especially in the location of water pipes, characterizes most of the dwellings. In one short afternoon, three cellars examined showed burst water pipes, due to placing the pipes against the outer walls and, not content with this folly, the wall selected was frequently the one exposed to the biting cold of north winds. In one house, the tenant gave a vivid description of her experiences on the bitterest day of the winter, when the water pipe in her tiny little kitchen-living room had suddenly burst, threatening to flood the only room in the house in which there was any provision for making a fire. Luckily, the whole house slanted so that the water ran out at the back of the house by way of the shallow air space beneath it. A less flimsy structure might have held in the sudden flood but this sieve-like affair let out the water almost as easily as it let in the cold.

Occasionally a house is so badly built that the walls are damp to the touch, a condition which may be accounted for either by the dampness seeping through, or by the steam within the dwelling condensing on the cold walls. Complaints of this condition were rare although the temperature was such that all cold weather shortcomings were at their worst.

Considering the cheap and thoughtless construction of many of these houses, there were few cases of broken windows, missing clapboards, and exposed laths, nor was there much complaint of leaking roofs. Indeed, over and over again, I was told that the roof had just been mended or that the landlord would surely mend it if it did leak when the next rain came.

One bit of negligence is noticeable throughout the city and is not at all limited to the less expensive houses. This is a lack of paint, which makes the whole city rather dingy and dreary,—a defect doubtless less apparent in the summer when grass and trees lend much natural beauty to the country side. Another small city of New Jersey, Asbury Park, might well be taken for a model in this respect. Every spring the paint pot is brought out and at least the trimmings are "touched up"—frequently the whole house is "gone over." Because this is done so often, the expense is never very great but the result is that the city has an air of prosperity rarely equaled and never surpassed in a "wooden city," to my knowledge. There



NORTH PLAINFIELD. ASHES AND RUBBISH PILED IN THE YARD.

is an old Dutch saying that "paint costs nothing," meaning that whatever is expended on paint is saved in deterioration.

#### GARBAGE, ASHES AND RUBBISH.

The most immediate, pressing need of Plainfield is a method of collecting garbage and other refuse thoroughly. This need is felt throughout the city; no one is exempt. He who manages his own problem satisfactorily suffers from his neighbor who is more careless, thoughtless, or possibly only more unfavorably situated than himself. At present each householder disposes of his ashes, garbage and rubbish as

seems to him best. Several collectors, licensed by the Board of Health, make a farce of removing garbage and ashes for a small fee. There are complaints all along the line. From the negro gardener on Third Street and the professional man in a first class resident section comes the same query: "What can we do? How can we compel the collectors to carry out their bargain?" Some people make no attempt to have the refuse removed but instead throw it into the street or yard, a method of disposal which is open to many objections but is



PLAINFIELD. YARD FILLED WITH RUBBISH OF ALL KINDS. BOXES AND BASKET CONTAIN ASHES AND REFUSE.

easily accounted for. When a family budget of \$10 or \$12 a week must house, feed and clothe two adults and seven children, the surplus to be expended for garbage removal is so small that the garbage rarely gets far beyond the front gate.

If this method of collection by private concerns could be made thorough and complete, there would still be objections

to the practice. The employment of several collectors in the same street is wasteful and extravagant, the unsavory carts are continually passing through the streets and the method and place of final disposal is objectionable.

Conditions resulting from the present haphazard state of affairs disfigure the city; yards are strewn with ashes; boxes, cans, and other receptacles, filled to overflowing with garbage, litter the rear porches and sheds. Unsightly as such conditions are, there is a greater menace when sickening odors and filthy flies bespeak a long delayed collection.



NORTH PLAINFIELD. PIANO BOX USED FOR  
STORAGE. AN ATTEMPT TO MAKE GOOD THE  
LACK OF CELLAR AND FUEL SHEDS.

Many of the homes visited show that even in the poorest families strenuous efforts are made to dispose of both ashes and garbage. The garbage is usually burned, which is a good solution of the problem if thoroughly carried out, but all too often half-burned garbage is thrown out with the ashes, a

practice which increases with the advent of warm weather, when the amount of garbage increases and the kitchen fire decreases. The ashes are sometimes carted away but more often they are thrown onto the lowest part of the yard in a vain attempt to get rid of the water which always appears at the first suggestion of warm weather. As for the discarded bottles and tin cans which accumulate so quickly, vacant lots and rear ends of deep yards are disfigured with them, and the presence of broken glass and jagged tins is a constant danger, especially where shoes are none too thick and strong.

Collection of garbage, ashes and all rubbish by the city is a legitimate function of government. Only by such governmental activities can a wholesome, cleanly, and attractive city be obtained. The advantages of city collection are too numerous to be more than touched on here. The first and most important is that such collection can be made thorough, reaching into every home and place of business in the city, so that the entire community will be sweet and clean. Another aspect of the subject is the question of economy. It can not be doubted that the city as a whole can make a better bargain for this service than can the individual householders; the contractors would plan to collect from house to house without duplicating, whereas now the several collectors go over the same routes, causing waste and extravagance, not to mention the almost continuous presence of numerous unsightly carts which give forth the odor of decaying waste as they pass through the streets. Because of the amount involved, the city would be in a position to enforce the terms of the contract and to control the method and place of final disposal as no individual can do. Any effective contract of this kind calls for a penalty for delay in collection or other violation of the terms of the contract. A small part of the time now spent by the Board of Health in trying to have isolated cases of extreme filth cleared up should suffice to supervise the work of the contracting collector.

### DARK ROOMS.

It hardly seems necessary in this enlightened age to point out the utter folly of dark rooms. Those cities which are cursed with them are paying the price in high death rates, infant mortality, and inefficient citizens who barely carry themselves at best and are a dead weight on the community at the first signs of hard times or family stress. That a place like Plainfield, or North Plainfield, should permit the existence of dwellings with such rooms is a civic disgrace. Yet in the

houses inspected, eight in Plainfield and one in North Plainfield have such rooms. Those in Plainfield are in a group of semi-detached houses in Cottage Place, which were originally built with six rooms to a house, two rooms with no window to the outer air. The Board of Health has succeeded in having windows cut from these rooms to the hall and from the hall to the yard, an alteration which improves the ventilation



PLAINFIELD. DARK ROOM SHOWING WINDOW TO ADJOINING ROOM. NOTE THE UNTIDY BED. A TWO-MINUTE EXPOSURE WAS NECESSARY TO GET THIS PICTURE, THE LIGHTEST POINT IN THE ROOM.

greatly but leaves much to be desired in the way of light. Houses similar to these elsewhere in the city, and also apartments in "brick blocks," show unwholesome dark rooms.

In North Plainfield, the house referred to as having dark rooms is arranged for four families, each apartment on the first floor has one room with no outside window, all light and ventilation is through an adjoining room. Under the present

State Tenement House Law, houses like this can not be built. Vacant apartments showed that the dark rooms are shunned.

Dark rooms are now prohibited in all tenements; local ordinances, well enforced, should secure equally good conditions in all dwellings. Justice to tenant, landlord and public, demands this. To the tenant because, through ignorance or other causes, he will live in these disease-breeding spots if they are permitted; to the landlord because he builds his house usually in good faith that what the inspector passes is all right, but if dark rooms are passed, he will find that he has erected a building which is condemned as unwholesome, and which can



PLAINFIELD. THE SAME HOUSE AS THE PRECEDING. LIVING ROOM IN A WELL LIGHTED APARTMENT.

not compete financially either with well lighted dwellings or with apartments in the neighboring tenements, in which the State Law has compelled all rooms to have outside windows. In at least two places it has been shown that the dark room dwelling has little chance when light and air are supplied in near-by houses. For some ten years now New York City and the State of New Jersey have prevented the further erection of dark room tenements. The same testimony is received from City and State, the old houses have no chance in competition with the new. Higher rents are paid if necessary but, at all costs, out of the dark room houses into the light and air of the new goes tenant after tenant. Lowered rents in the ill-

made buildings only slacken the tide, they neither stop it nor turn it. Losses from frequent vacancies and low rents have proved a powerful incentive for remodelling and demolishing the old dark room tenement.

Finally, the construction of dwellings with dark rooms is unjust to the public because on it rests the burden of caring for the tubercular, the widow, the orphans and the weaklings. The dark room is no new pest. City after city in the East has found by dearly bought experience, that it is one of the most potent factors in the complex whole, which is at the root of misery, poverty and crime.

What has been proven of the dark rooms in tenements is



NORTH PLAINFIELD. THE WELL IS WITHIN A FEW FEET OF THE PRIVY.  
WASTE WATER IS THROWN INTO THE YARD.

equally true of all dark room dwellings. In New Jersey the tenements are controlled by the State, a control which should be upheld and strengthened by all right-minded citizens; the one-family and two-family houses are left to local supervision. At the present time, the Plainfield Board of Health can compel the cutting of windows in the old dark rooms, under certain conditions, but this is a make-shift at best, improving conditions little. The mistake is in the fact that the Board is doing relief work rather than preventive work. The most unguarded type of dwelling at present is the apartment above the stores or in so-called "brick blocks." There is a tendency

to assume that these are tenements and are amply protected by the State law, but if there are less than three apartments in any house, the State law does not affect the conditions there any more than in the most costly residence in the State.

### WATER SUPPLY.

A company supplies the water for Plainfield and for much of North Plainfield. So adequate and good is the supply that almost all of the old yard wells are done away with. Only



NORTH PLAINFIELD. YARD PUMP WITH NO PROVISION FOR CARING FOR OVERFLOW.

two houses of all those visited in Plainfield are still unconnected with the city pipes, and a very few still keep a pump for use in addition to the usual supply. That old familiar tale of the summer coolness and sweet taste of the well water was heard again and will continue to be heard so long as there is a well in the land. As a good water supply is available in both the districts inspected in Plainfield, the wells should be

closed. Contamination can take place quickly; a well which has been recently tested may be the source of an epidemic a few days later. The danger of such contamination increases with the crowding of population.

The problem in North Plainfield is not so easily solved, as it involves the question of waste disposal also. Many of the houses on Harmony Street are connected with the piped supply, only to be overwhelmed by the problem of the waste water. There are no sewers and the yards are frequently too small for adequate cesspools. The only permanent solution of the problem is the installation of a sewer system. The use of wells in this district is especially perilous because the small yards bring the wells and privies so near together, a condition not improved by the addition of cesspools.

Any belief that this problem is purely a local one, affecting only the tenants and owners of the small houses and lots, is founded on lack of thorough knowledge. The people of this district work in both the borough and city. Disease, breeding among the cottages of Harmony Street, would menace the whole community. Already the burden of partial support of several of these families is borne by the public,—how much of this debility is due to the conditions no one can say. The present lack of typhoid and kindred ills in this locality is a miracle, but it is only a few years since dysentery demanded toll, and who shall prophesy when the next epidemic will occur?

In addition to the kind of water supply, the location of the supply is of importance to the health of a family. Under the best conditions, heavy drudging work is the lot of the poor man's wife, especially when the children are too little to help themselves. Inconvenient and awkward arrangement of sinks and stoves may be the added burden beneath which the wife and mother fails and leaves the burden of the family to community care.

The following table shows how often this handicap, of an inconvenient water supply, was found.

TABLE SHOWING LOCATION AND KIND OF WATER SUPPLY

Name of District	Kind of Water		Location of Water Supply						
	City	Well	Apt.	Hall	Cellar	Yard	Adj. Shed	U. H.	Total
Cottage Place .....	36	1	20	0 <sup>†</sup>	8 <sup>‡</sup>	9	0	4	41
West Third Street .....	40	1	36	1 <sup>†</sup>	2 <sup>‡</sup>	2	0	6	47
Harmony and Race Streets ...	20	13	15	0 <sup>†</sup>	0 <sup>‡</sup>	17	1	2	35
Total .. .	96	15	71	1 <sup>†</sup>	10 <sup>‡</sup>	28	1	12	123

<sup>†</sup>Tenement, 1 apt. has supply, 2 use supply in hall.

<sup>‡</sup>One in cellar (living room-kitchen).

In Cottage Place the water supply was in the yard in nine instances; as some of the houses are of the two-family type, more than nine families used the yard fixtures. Families living on the second floor have to carry every drop of water used for washing, cleaning and cooking through the house and up stairs. No wonder some of these activities are sometimes slighted. If the hydrant freezes, then a neighbor is called on to furnish a supply, and a very small supply it is, too, as a rule.

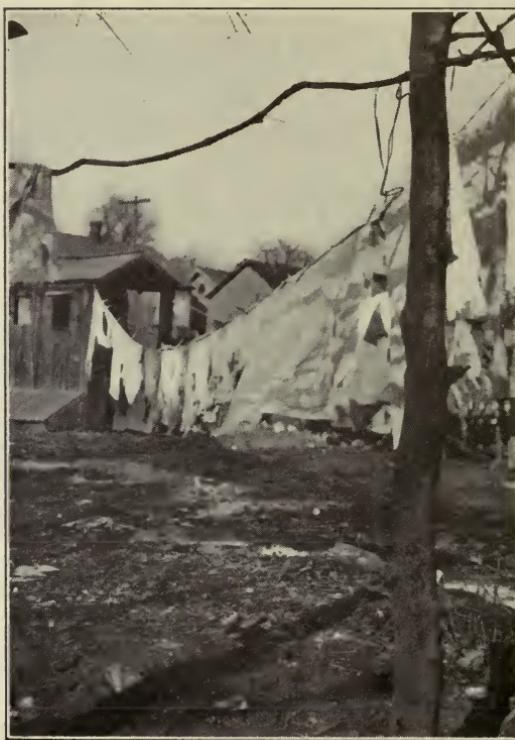


COTTAGE PLACE. YARD HYDRANT WITH IRON DRAIN.

On Race Street there is one family which must choose between going out the front door and around the house to the yard, or going through the first floor rooms,—a process which deprives the family on the first floor of all privacy.

In Plainfield the yard hydrants are usually equipped with an iron sink or drain. These are seldom fixed but change their grade with every passing storm, sometimes emptying

their contents into the sewer pipes, but more often retaining slops and waste water, together with small particles of food which soon pollute the air and attract insects. In North Plainfield the overflow from pumps and hydrants, together with the slops, are usually thrown into the yards and explain the presence of water which stands ankle deep in every little hollow, and the wastes of mud which make a veritable slough of the rest of the yard.



NORTH PLAINFIELD. SWAMPY YARD. WATER IS OVERFLOW FROM A HYDRANT, TOGETHER WITH SLOPS. THE CONDITION IS MADE WORSE BY A MID-WINTER THAW.

But little better than the yard hydrants are the cellar sinks. In Cottage Place these are almost as frequent as the yard supplies, but do not characterize either West Third Street or the North Plainfield districts.

These cellar sinks mean one of two things: either the water is all carried up stairs or the family is brought down to

the water. In the first case there is much unnecessary hard labor for the woman, which is frequently done with a toddling baby at her skirts and perhaps a ten days' baby in the cradle. The cellar steps are steep and rickety, the floor rough and uneven,—there is danger of tripping in the darkness, there is perhaps more danger from the unclean sink hidden away in a far corner, out of sight.



COTTAGE PLACE. SMALL WINDOW IN A CELLAR KITCHEN.

If, by any stretch of the imagination, the cellar can be considered habitable, the chances are that it is converted into the kitchen, and here the mother of the family spends the greater part of the day,—the baby, too, wrapped in a shawl and laid to sleep on the table or tucked in the cradle near the stove. In such a kitchen, I have seen as many as four Italian women, three dangling babes in swaddling clothes, the fourth hushing a mite in a baby carriage, while three or four children ran from yard to kitchen and back again. Not all these peo-

ple lived in this house but, in true Italian style, daughters and daughters-in-law came frequently to see the mother and the kitchen was the customary reception room.

A sink within each apartment is the minimum convenience which can be permitted with any just regard for health and cleanliness. Such an arrangement gives each family access to the water with due amount of privacy, and on the other hand, makes each family responsible for the condition of sink and faucet.



NORTH PLAINFIELD. TYPICAL YARD PRIVY.

### TOILETS.

Even more serious than the problems arising from the improper location of water supply, are those which result from the location of toilets. Closets which are in the yards have all the objections of a yard water supply and many others. The inconvenience of frozen fixtures is greater, if possible, in the case of toilets than in the case of water pipes.

Furthermore, toilets in the yards are of a semi-public character. Enclosed yards and separate closets for each family help to minimize this evil but no precaution can entirely obviate it.

Closets placed in the cellar are inconvenient, and almost always poorly lighted and ventilated, making it well nigh impossible to keep the compartment and fixture clean.

Both yard and cellar closets lead to the continual use of portable receptacles, especially if there are children, old people, or invalids to care for. The conditions resulting from carelessness in the use of these and the foul air in the rooms where long unemptied and uncovered vessels stand, beggar description.

Many cities have to face a condition caused by lack of sufficient toilets. Plainfield has all but escaped extreme instances of this sort. Two places were noted where three or more families were dependent on a single closet. Two families to one closet is not a good arrangement, although a frequent one. The greatest objections to it are the lack of privacy (for such a closet must be accessible to both families), the divided responsibility for repair and cleanliness, and most important of all, the moral dangers of the jointly used compartment. The use of such closets is attended with risk enough in the day time,—at night the situation is many times worse. It needs no imagination to grasp the dangers of the situation when young girls and the burly men boarders have equal access to the yard or cellar closet.

TOILET ACCOMMODATIONS, APPURTENANT TO EACH HOUSE, CLASSIFIED BY LOCATION AND TYPE OF FIXTURE

Name of District	Yard		House				U. H.	Total Houses Served		
	Privy	Hopper	Apartment		Hall					
			Hopper	Wash Out Or Down	Hopper	Wash Out Or Down				
Cottage Place .....	0	17	0	0	0†	0	20†	1	3 41	
West Third Street .....	1	17	0	12	1†	5	3†	3	5 47	
Harmony and Race Streets	29	1	0	0	1†	0	0†	2	2 35	
Total .. .....	29	1	0	0	1†	0	0†	2	2 35	

†One 2-family house has toilet in hall in addition to one in cellar.

‡On 1st floor, opens to yard only.

The table shows a difference in the type of fixture most often found in each district. The privy is almost universal in North Plainfield where there is no sewer and the lots are too small for adequate cesspools. West Third Street has the best conditions, nearly half the fixtures being of the wash out

or wash down type. In Cottage Place hopper closets, either in the yard or cellar, are customary. This is the closet used where there is danger of freezing. Though cheap to install, it is easily soiled and difficult to clean, a difficulty which rapidly increases, as the enamel wears off quickly, the iron base corrodes, and cleanliness is incompatible with use. While it is possible to prevent the waste pipes of these closets from freezing, it is difficult. The flow is usually turned on continuously during the cold spell and even then frequently congeals.

### RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN SMALL HOUSES.

In addition to the houses in the districts mentioned, most of which have been built for some years, a study was made of some of the more recently constructed small houses, in order to ascertain what are the present tendencies in building. For this purpose the little houses on St. Mary's Avenue, several groups in the "West End," and the two brick rows on West Fourth Street, beyond Plainfield Avenue, were given special attention.

The dwellings on St. Mary's Avenue are two stories and attic in height, with three rooms on each floor. Each floor is rented separately. There is a sink and running water in each apartment. The toilet is in the cellar, access to which is either through the rooms on the first floor, or through the yard. Theoretically, the second floor family uses the yard entrance to the cellar, but only a glance at the inconvenience of going out of the front door and so around to the cellar door at the side of the house, is necessary to suggest that more often the first floor apartment is used as a hall way. This does away with the privacy of the down stairs rooms.

The same lack of judgment in installing the water pipes which was noted elsewhere was found here. The plumbing is placed in the northeasterly side of the houses.

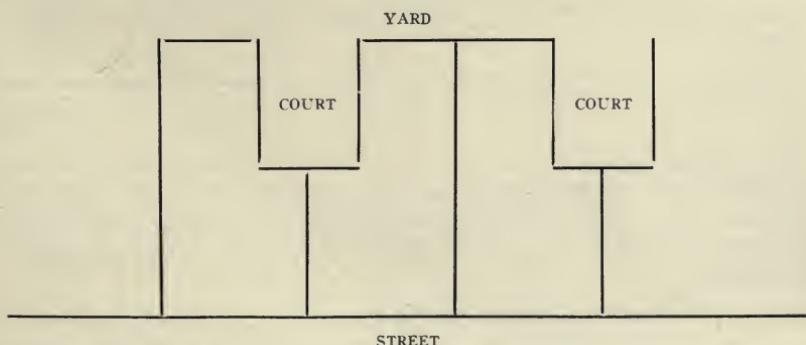
The abundance of light and air about these houses is to be commended, but the plan of the houses is poor, the apartments too small for most families, and the number and location of the toilets undesirable.

The present monotonous appearance of the houses may be mitigated in time as the street is improved, the house-holders carry out some of their individual ideas in home-making, and time softens the "newness" of the dwellings.

In the "West End" are found several groups of inexpensive dwellings. Rows similar to that at 1335-1341 West

Third Street are seen on many of the streets in this section. This row consists of four two-story houses. Each house has four light rooms, a cellar, a front porch and ample yard. There is a sink and running water in each kitchen, but a yard-toilet (this part of the city is not yet sewerized). Each house is occupied by one family. The rent is \$10. These short rows of small one-family houses are perhaps the most usual form of house going up for the use of the unskilled laborer, but the detached two-family house is also seen. A number of these houses have been built on Rushmore Avenue, not far from Third Street. There are separate doors for the apartments, the cellar is divided, and each family has a sink with running water and a toilet. Unfortunately, no sewer connection is possible here and the present arrangements for waste disposal are most unsanitary. When the new sewer is installed and proper connection made with it, these houses should be suitable for habitation. They are not as desirable as the one-family houses which have good yards for each family and offer greater facility for family privacy. Care must be taken that the spaces between such houses are wide enough to give adequate light and ventilation.

Of a somewhat more expensive type of construction, are the brick rows on West Fourth Street in the 600 block. The rents also are higher—\$14 or \$15 being the price for four rooms and bath. The houses are brick, built in rows. They are two stories high and are arranged for two families in each house. There are two of these brick rows, one having apartments of three rooms and toilet and the other having four rooms and bath. The tenants of these houses are negroes. This type of house is better than the unskilled man can usually afford, but there is a need for this more expensive dwelling, so that the man who can afford something better may not be forced into the very cheapest kind of house.



## TUBERCULOSIS.

The material used in making this study of Tuberculosis in the Plainfield districts was obtained from the records of the city Board of Health. Every effort was made to check the records, both case and house records were used and occasionally even the death records were consulted in an attempt to make sure of the accuracy of the data. For the last few years the records of the nurse were of value also. The city records have been kept since 1903. Owing to the prejudice against reporting cases at first, it is probable that the earlier records are incomplete, but changes in the law and in public sentiment have combined to make the records full and accurate reports of the cases in Plainfield. Care has been taken that no case shall appear twice in the report, an inaccuracy which might easily occur as a result of the frequent changes of residence of some of the people.

Facts in regard to the North Plainfield situation were obtained with difficulty. No locality there seemed to have as many cases as the two districts in Plainfield, but the cold facts to back up this opinion were not obtained.

The report of the Board of Health of Plainfield shows that 70 cases of tuberculosis were reported during the year 1913. This is one case for about every 56 dwellings (based on the 1910 census figures) for the entire city. Both Cottage Place and the West Third Street district show a much higher ratio; one case to about 20 houses in Cottage Place, and one case to about 12 houses in the West Third Street district.

TUBERCULOSIS HISTORY OF THE PLAINFIELD DISTRICTS FROM 1903 TO  
JANUARY 1, 1914

Number of District	Number of Cases Reported and Confirmed			Number of Houses
	In 1913	1903-1912	Total	
Cottage Place .....	2†	9	11	41
West Third Street .....	4†	9	13	47
Total .. ....	6†	18	24	88

†Another case reported, 1913, from Monroe Avenue, moved to the district before the investigation was made.

These appalling figures are doubtless due in part to the character of the population. A majority of the patients are negroes, the remainder are almost without exception immigrants, who have not yet "found themselves" in their new surroundings.

It has been said that of the general measures for the prevention of tuberculosis, the most important are probably hous-

ing and food supply. Our data are too limited to more than indicate how far this important problem of housing has affected the situation in Plainfield. There are some rather striking facts in the history of Cottage Place,—the eight semi-detached houses in which dark rooms are found, show a record far worse than the other houses on the block. Three of these eight houses have a history of tuberculosis. The indictment is stronger if we consider the number of cases reported from the district since 1903. Of the 11 cases reported from



PLAINFIELD. A SHANTY ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY. THE FATHER IS THOUGHT TO BE TUBERCULAR. WHAT CHANCE HAVE THE CHILDREN!

Cottage Place, 6 have been from these eight houses, 5 from the other thirty-three houses on the street. Perhaps it makes it stronger to say that if all the houses on the street had records as bad as this, 30 cases instead of 11 would have been reported in eleven years, and a similar record throughout the city would mean more than 2,900 cases in the same time.

One house in the group has a particularly bad record. In 1903 two cases, not in the same family, were reported; in 1906 one case and another in 1913. Of the early cases one was a young colored woman who should have been entering on her most useful years, but her death was reported a year or two later. The case reported last year is being cared for at Bonnie Burn and the public is bearing the cost. How long will houses like these be permitted to be occupied, and the public bear the cost of the results?

On West Third Street no house had such a marked tubercular history as those just discussed. There are, however, instances which do indicate the infectious nature of the disease. Bare statistics record the tubercular condition of a father and his two boys, followed by the death of the father in 1911, the effort to help the sons at Bonnie Burn, the death reports of the brothers within a few weeks of each other during the summer of 1913. There is no record of the woman who fought the disease first for her husband's life and then for her two sons, but a vacant house on Third Street speaks of a broken home and a woman left alone in the world.

At present, Bonnie Burn is caring for a Jewish immigrant and his American-born son. The boy is in the incipient stage and there is a chance that the county sanatorium may be the means of preventing a repetition of the tragedy.

Last fall a colored woman died of tuberculosis. Both she and a nephew lived in the Third Street district, but not in the same house. The young man went to Bonnie Burn shortly after his aunt died. There is no proof of infection from aunt to nephew but the facts are worth a second thought.

During the last five months of 1913 there were four deaths from tuberculosis of residents of this block. There are several patients from the district at Bonnie Burn now,—these not only have a better chance for recovery or improvement, but so long as they stay away from their families one source of infection is removed.

In some homes a patient may be isolated so that infection is almost impossible. Two factors render such isolation especially difficult in the district studied. In the first place, the quarters are too restricted, the rooms are too small and too few, and the houses often planned so that rooms must be used for hall-ways. To this difficulty is added ignorance, a factor with which every doctor must reckon. Nevertheless, if the proper kind of a house could be obtained, some of the more intelligent families might prove themselves apt pupils in the

home care of tubercular patients. The successful treatment of this dread disease in the patient's home, would go far to raise the present standards of living among the poorer element of the population. Carefulness, cleanliness, and plenty of fresh air, would work wonders in most of the houses visited in the course of this Survey.

### GOOD CONDITIONS.

Plainfield is fortunate in taking up the problem of housing conditions at this time. At present only about 8% of the families are living in tenements, and in North Plainfield less than 4%. Many suburban cities have been far more seriously affected by the bad example of New York.

Now is the time to save Plainfield from tenement conditions. Other cities are realizing the great opportunity and either by local measures or combining for State laws, are assuring healthful living conditions to their children.

Plainfield's problem is simplified by the fact that her people have not yet acquired the "tenement habit." Small houses are plentiful and land abundant.

Another condition to the credit of Plainfield, is the small number of dwellings with dark rooms. To this must be added congratulations that the Board of Health can and has required alterations in some of the houses marred by this form of construction. Many cities which have few windowless rooms have rooms which are gloomy because houses are built too close together. Narrow, dingy spaces between dwellings are rare in Plainfield, adequate courts and spaces and yards are usual; this is a good building habit which should be made permanent by proper housing regulations.

A good and adequate water supply such as Plainfield enjoys, is a potent factor for good living. The method of charging for this necessity, which does not penalize its plentiful use, is to be commended.

Too much cannot be said for the control of the tuberculosis situation in the city of Plainfield. Co-operation of the Board of Health, Anti-Tuberculosis League and the Visiting Nurse, has resulted in excellent supervision of patients, and careful oversight of children who have been exposed to infection. Bonnie Burn is caring for many of the patients, a care which would be more effective if the patients did not so frequently return too soon, and to bad living conditions. Often only a serious relapse will convince such people that a prolonged stay at the sanatorium is absolutely their only hope for recovery.

## RECOMMENDATIONS.

It cannot be too strongly asserted that tenement construction menaces Plainfield with all its attendant evils of over-crowding, lack of family privacy, the breaking up of home life and the train of vice and crime that follow in their wake. Local ordinances strengthening the State law are most necessary. Local support for the State law and to improve that law are demanded for the good of the city and the State. Wider courts and better fire protection are two urgent amendments needed in the present requirements. Only a State Department, adequately equipped with men and money, can obtain the best results in those outlying districts so difficult to reach by local measures.

The problem of the disposal of garbage, ashes and rubbish is one which has been put off too long. The situation is serious and the problem calls for immediate solution. There is no alternative to city collection worthy of consideration. In no other way can this responsibility be adequately met. The city has shirked the issue too long. Bad habits will have to be made over and a civic pride aroused before the city can hope to present a clean, well-groomed appearance to the world.

The extension of the sewer system to the "West End" and the immediate installation of sewers in North Plainfield cannot be too strongly urged. It is encouraging to learn that this work is under consideration. Its early completion is necessary to the health of the community. Under no consideration should tenements or two-family houses be permitted on unsewered streets. One-family houses, built on the outskirts, will frequently precede the extension of sewer and water pipes, but these improvements become necessities as soon as any street or section has more than a scattering of dwellings.

Certain sanitary provisions should be made a part of a city housing code. The prohibition of cellar and yard closets and of hopper fixtures, together with the requirement for a separate toilet for each apartment are standards below which no city can aim with impunity. The absolute enforcement of the ordinance requiring windows to the outer air is called for. Again it must be pointed out that violations of this ordinance are more likely to occur in apartments in "brick blocks" than in detached houses. The wording of the ordinance should be changed so that there will be no doubt that *all* rooms in dwellings must have windows opening directly to street, yard or wide court.

The ordinance prohibiting the use for sleeping purposes of a cellar room, the ceiling of which is less than two feet above the curb, is far too lax. Many cities much more congested and overcrowded than Plainfield prohibit the use of cellar rooms for dwelling purposes and allow the use of basement rooms (i. e., rooms one-half or more above the curb) only under special conditions. Cellar rooms are always poorly lighted and ventilated, and usually too damp for dwelling purposes. A good cellar is excellent for the storage of fuel, but for wholesome living, rooms entirely above the ground, well lighted and ventilated, are necessary.



THE "FRONT DOOR" AT THE REAR OF A FRONT STREET HOUSE. ACCESS IS VIA AN ALLEY AND UNLOVELY YARD, LITTERED WITH WASTE PAPER, AND AFTER RAIN OR THAW MUDDY AND WET.

Certain minor streets in the "West End" lend themselves to small house development under careful supervision. These streets may be narrow, but the houses should be set back so as to give 40 feet from building line to building line. Sewers

should be laid as soon as possible, so as to avoid the conditions found in Harmony Street. Small lots on these minor streets should furnish opportunity for one-family houses which could be owned or rented by the man of small means.

In addition to these recommendations which are properly the business of the city, there are two activities which might well be made the business of some group or society. One is the work of a practical visiting housekeeper, who could show the newly-arrived immigrant our ways. A woman of boundless tact and patience would be needed for the work. The other field of work is rather different, it is the encouragement of gardens, small ones in the yards, larger ones in the vacant lots and waste places. Such gardens add to the quantity and quality of the food used, and at the same time save money and do away with the bare spots and unsightly dumps, which mar the appearance of so many of our cities.



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